

**POLITICAL PATRONAGE AND
POLITICAL VALUES:
THE DEVELOPMENTAL ROLE OF
POLITICAL PATRONAGE AND ITS
IMPACT ON SHAPING POLITICAL
VALUES IN RURAL UGANDA**

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SUMMARY

Political patronage and political values: The developmental role of political patronage and its impact on shaping political values in rural Uganda.

This article points out the importance of neo-patrimonial theories in understanding local socio-political dynamics. Through the analysis of a case study in Western Uganda, it is firstly shown how within 'formal' state institutions, there is an 'informal' logic of competing political camps. These political camps, and their subsidiary networks of political patronage, have adverse effects for development. Secondly,

this system has a profound impact on how people perceive the service-delivery functions of the state: people on the ground do not expect the state to be there for everyone, but only for the people of their 'political camp' or network. Also the role of the state is seen as strongly personalised, as the 'big men' are perceived to have taken over the service provision activities of the state.

Key Words: *Local Government, Neo-Patrimonialism, Patronage, Uganda, Service-Provision*

1. INTRODUCTION

The literature on the 'personalisation' or 'privatisation' of the state in Africa is vast. Many authors argue that state and society in Africa cannot be treated separately, but are blurred categories through the interpenetration by personal, familial, factional and fraternal networks, which Bayart characterizes as 'rhizomes'. These rhizomes, understood as 'subterranean' structures (i.e. not manifested in formal public institutions) linking actors within a system of interaction, connect the state and political elites with people on the grassroots level: 'high politics' with 'low politics', patrons with clients. In this process, state institutions have become 'personalised' or 'privatised': power and authority are situated in the person, not in the office.

Many terms refer to these phenomena. Chabal speaks of 'neo-patrimonialism', Bayart of the '*politique du ventre*', Schatzberg of a 'moral matrix of father, family and food', Lonsdale of 'moral ethnicity and political tribalism', de Sardan of a 'moral economy of corruption', etc.¹

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¹ Bayart, Jean-Francois, *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly* (Longman, London 1996). Berman, B., 'Ethnicity, patronage and the African state', *African Affairs*, 97, 389 (1998), pp. 305-341. Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford 1999). Lonsdale, J., 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism' In: Kaarsholm, P., Hultin, J., (eds.),

All of them argue that Africa is a continent governed by developmentally and democratically dysfunctional cultural logics.² Most of the literature on these issues tends to be discussed in abstract and theoretical terms, where little empirical data are provided. Case studies are rare, and if examples are provided, they tend to be limited to the national level.³ This article seeks to add some empirical insights into this neo-patrimonial literature. Through the elaboration of a case study of two conflicting patronage networks in a district in Western Uganda, the article firstly attempts to give empirical insights into the concrete functioning of these networks. What effect do they have on the structures of local government and the development of the area? Secondly, it wants to show the impact of this system on the political values of the population concerned: do people expect the 'state' to provide services, or have they come to rely exclusively on the services of their 'patron'?

It is important to note that this blending of the 'public' and the 'private' through patronage networks is definitely not a strictly African affair. Also in Western societies, personal relations and networks tend to play an important role in the management of public affairs and administrative-institutional rules. However, as will be shown, the intensity, importance and impact of these 'privatisation' processes tend to be much bigger in the sub-Saharan context. Firstly, the article shows how the privatisation of public institutions has become a crucial element in politics at a local level, with adverse developmental effects.⁴ Secondly, it is seen how neo-patrimonialism and networks of

Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism. (IDS Roskilde University, Roskilde 1994). Schatzberg, Michael, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food.* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2002). Olivier de Sardan, J. P., 'A moral economy of corruption in Africa?' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 1 (1999), pp. 25-52.

² Kelsall, T., *Democracy, de-agrarianisation and the African self* (Occasional Paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen), pp. 29-30.

³ See for example: Bayart, J.F., Ellis, S., Hibou, B., *The criminalization of the state in Africa.* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2003). Reno, William, *Warlord Politics and African States.* (Rienner, Boulder 1999).

⁴ As mentioned before, much of these analyses are limited to the national level. For analyses of the Ugandan case, see: Barkan, J., Simba, S., Ng'ethe, N., Titsworth, J., *The Political Economy of Uganda.* (Paper commissioned by the World Bank in

patronage have a strong impact on the attitudes of the citizens vis-à-vis the services provided by the state. People do not expect the services of the state to be there for everyone, but only for the people of their 'political camp' or network. The service-providing role of the state is seen as strongly personalised, as the 'big men' are perceived to have taken over the service-provision activities of the state.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND PATRONAGE

2.1. Neo-patrimonialism and patronage

Neo-patrimonialism is commonly used as a concept for defining political regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. Hyden defines it as following: "*Drawing on Max Weber, patrimonialism can be characterized as a system of rule in which all governmental authority and the corresponding economic rights tend to be treated as privately appropriated economic advantages and where governmental powers and the associated advantages are treated as private rights.*"⁵ In neo-patrimonial regimes, authority is exercised through patronage networks rather than through bureaucratic rules or laws. Government institutions are being strongly politicised through these networks, to the extent that some parts of these institutions have come to lie in private hands: formal political and bureaucratic institutions have become instruments for the accumulation of wealth and power for individuals and their networks.⁶ Resources and power are distributed within these networks, rather than to all citizens on an equal basis. In

fulfilment of purchase, unpublished 2004). Hickey, Sam, *The Politics of staying poor in Uganda*, (CPRC Working Paper 37, Manchester 2003); Mwenda, A., Tangri, R., 'Patronage politics, donor reforms, and regime consolidation in Uganda'. *African Affairs*, 104, 416 (2005), pp. 449-467; Mwenda, A., Tangri, R., 'Corruption and Cronyism in Uganda's privatization in the 1990s'. *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), pp. 117-133; Reno, William, 'War, debt and the role of pretending in Uganda's international relations.' (Occasional Paper, University of Copenhagen, Centre for African Studies 2000).

⁵ Hyden, Goran, "Civil Society, Social Capital, and Development: Dissection of a complex discourse". In: *Studies in Comparative International Development*; 32, 1(97), pp. 24-25.

⁶ Bratton, M., Van de Walle, N., 'Neopatrimonial regimes and political transitions in Africa', pp. 458-459.

this way, patrons build up power, and clients get rewards. Chabal and Daloz assert quite radically that: *"there are virtually no examples of social or political relations devoid of clientelistic calculations or considerations of identity."*⁷ The introduction of 'Western' political institutional structures therefore cannot lead automatically to the expected results of democratisation and development. From the neo-patrimonial perspective, the current African crisis can be explained *"as a result of a lack of fit between imported political institutions, ideas of development, and extant ideas of person, economy and state."*⁸ African political relations need therefore in the first place to be understood along 'indigenous' lines.

2.2. Local government and decentralisation in Uganda

In contemporary donor discourse, decentralisation is promoted as an essential part of poverty reduction measures: local governments are seen as the level closest to the citizens, and therefore most appropriate to translate local needs into effective poverty reduction policies. As this leads to the double advantage of local empowerment and efficient service delivery, decentralisation is pushed by donors as part of 'good governance' conditionalities, where developing countries have to take 'ownership' of. Uganda is an exception here. Ugandan decentralisation is not part of any donor-fuelled conditionality, but is closely bound up with the nature of the Ugandan political regime.

On its assumption of power in 1986, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) saw decentralisation as the way to reclaim state legitimacy on a non-partisan and non-ethnic basis. After two decades of centralised and predatory rule (under Obote and Amin), a genuine 'popular democracy' had to be established, particularly in the rural areas. On a political level, the NRM abolished the multi-party system,

⁷ Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford 1999), p. 30.

⁸ Kelsall, T., *Democracy, de-agrarianisation and the African self*. Occasional Paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, p. 31.

as this had only led to conflicts along ethnic lines, and installed a 'no-party democracy', the Movement.⁹

This process had started already during the liberation war in the early 1980s, when the liberation army led by Museveni established the Resistance Councils. These Resistance Councils were a pyramidal structure of local committees, which later became the Local Councils, the current bodies of local government. In other words, the decentralisation system in Uganda has its origins before the decentralisation process became 'en vogue' in donor circles. It is therefore a truly locally 'owned' system, which gradually became part of external donor discourses on decentralisation.¹⁰

Practically, a significant level of political and administrative autonomy is given to the Ugandan local governments, introducing a system of five 'layers' of local councils, from Local Council V down to Local Council I: district (LC V), county, sub-county, parish, village (LC I). In this way, grassroots demands are brought from the village level (LC I) up to the district (LC V). Today, local governments have the responsibility for the delivery of almost all services within the districts.¹¹ Uganda is seen as a star pupil in the decentralisation of government responsibilities, and as an example for the region.

The Ugandan decentralisation process not only aims to bring services closer to the people, it also wants to transform other aspects of state-society relations. As the Movement sees ethnic patronage as one of the main causes of predatory rule, its system of local councils and local governments seeks to abolish local systems of patronage (e.g. by ensuring boundaries of the districts cut across ethnic boundaries, and through the no-party system). It wants to abolish these personalised

⁹ Hickey, Sam, *The politics of staying poor in Uganda*. CPRC Working Paper 37, 2003, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, pp. 33-36.

¹⁰ At the time of implementation, it was not being promoted by the donors - Interview data (Uganda Local Authorities Association, 12-11-04 and Ministry of Local Government, donor coordination unit, 03-11-04)

¹¹ The process started with the presidential statement in 1992. By 1993, the decentralisation process started. This was formalised in the 1995 Constitution, and later through the Local Government Act of 1997.

systems of governance and re-establish state legitimacy on an impersonal and universal basis.¹²

However, these optimistic assumptions have been severely criticised by government reports¹³, academic studies¹⁴ and donor reports¹⁵ alike. They argue that decentralisation has led to a worsening of corruption and even a deepening of the patronage mode of politics. As decentralisation is introduced in a political environment already characterised by clientelistic linkages, it further entrenches local elites and their ties of patronage.

2.3. The two 'political camps' and the struggle for service-provision

Research was conducted in a district in Western Uganda. Within the district, the actual research focused on four selected villages in two sub-counties.¹⁶ As most districts in Uganda, it is a multi-ethnic and

¹² Hickey, Sam, *The Politics of staying poor in Uganda*, CPRC Working Paper 37, Manchester 2003, pp. 32-33.

¹³ Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, *Deepening the Understanding of Poverty: Learning from the poor* (MoFPED, Kampala 2000). Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, *Deepening the Understanding of Poverty. Second Participatory Poverty Assessment Report*. (MoFPED, Kampala 2002).

¹⁴ Francis, P., James, R., 'Balancing rural poverty reduction and citizen participation: the contradictions of Uganda's decentralization programme'. *World Development*, 31, 2 (2003), pp. 325-337. Ellis, F., Bahiigwa, R., 'Livelihoods and Rural Poverty Reduction in Uganda'. *World Development*, 31, 6 (2003), pp. 997-1013. Flanary, R., Watt, D., 'The state of corruption: a case study of Uganda'. *Third World Quarterly*, 20, 3 (1999), pp. 522-528.

¹⁵ Barkan, J., Simba, S., Ng'ethe, N., Titsworth, J., *The Political Economy of Uganda*. (Paper commissioned by the World Bank in fulfilment of purchase, unpublished 2004). Some people in government- and donor- institutions say this is a consequence of the higher visibility of corruption. Corruption is not higher than it used to be before decentralisation, it has only become more visible. (Interview data).

¹⁶ The district was selected after a preliminary research visit to Uganda in October-November 2004, when extensive interviews were carried out with national- and district-level officials. Within the district, two sub-counties were selected, and within each sub-county, two villages. Also these were selected after extensive interviews at district-level, and preliminary site-visits. Data for the research were obtained

primarily agricultural district, relying on subsistence farming for employment and income. The district is being divided by a struggle for power between two 'political camps', with as main antagonists the two local 'big men', referred to hereafter as 'the Minister' and 'the Woman MP'. The Minister has been the big man of the district since 1986, when President Museveni came to power. He is a close ally of the President, and has held several high-level national functions. The Minister was initially seen as the political mentor of the Woman MP: he brought her into politics, and they were initially campaigning together. In 1992, the Minister lost his position in the cabinet, and was replaced by the woman MP, who became a vice-minister. This meant the beginning of a political power struggle between the Minister and the Woman MP. Until that time, the Minister (together with his allies) had always been the most powerful politician of the district. When the Minister lost his position in the cabinet, his power monopoly was suddenly seriously challenged - in his very own constituency. Since then, this electoral struggle has remained a struggle for power and influence: the Minister and the Woman MP try to build and sustain their respective local power-bases and legitimacy. The fact that the Woman MP was replaced by the Minister 2 years later (in 1994) did not change much in this power struggle: the whole district became polarized, whereby politicians aligned themselves with one side or the other. The district chairman is for example an important ally of the Woman MP. Both camps are within the NRM-O¹⁷, and involve both national-level and local-level politicians.

The struggle has very little to do with ideology, although in this struggle for power ideological issues do come into play. One of these ideological issues is the restoration of the traditional kingdom of the dominant ethnic group, the Bakonzo. Throughout Uganda's history, all regimes have struggled with what to do about the kingdoms. Also at this moment, Uganda is in the midst of a national debate about the role of kingdoms. This debate is reflected in the district. On the one hand, the Woman MP actively campaigns in favor of the kingdom, which

primarily from primary sources, through a combination of household surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews and ethnography.

¹⁷ The NRM-O is the new name of the National Resistance Movement or the Movement after it registered as a political party in the multiparty system in 2005.

has never been formally recognized by the government. Her main argument is that the kingdom will bring more influence, resources and prestige to the region, just as other kingdoms have done for their regions. On the other hand, the Minister argues that the kingdom will bring more division in the region. Moreover, the king (who has returned from exile) was involved in rebel activities in the area.

The main manifestation of this struggle is a heightened competition for services and resources, with which politicians then try to reward their supporters, allies and constituencies. Both camps, and politicians in general, build up their legitimacy and power base through the various development projects they bring to the region. The claim of the politician does not necessarily need to be true, as long as he creates the perception that he was the one who brought certain service provision activities to the region. Therefore, both the Minister and the Woman MP will do whatever possible to attract service provision activities. Firstly, outside of state institutions, they will try to attract donor agencies or civil society organisations to the area. Secondly, within state institutions, they will struggle to get hold of these services, and they will also try to have as many of 'their' people as possible at all levels of the government.

In this situation, service-provision is in most cases perceived to be part of the development project of the Minister or the Woman MP. This may not necessarily be the case, but it is the perception among the people on the ground. Their credo is: *'It is the politician who said the services would arrive, therefore it is the politician who brought them.'*

For these reasons, state or CSO projects are not perceived as neutral services for the community rendered by a neutral, independent state, but as services rendered by the Minister or the Woman MP to their constituency. In the villages researched, every interviewee would sum up a list of the various services and projects (schools, health services, roads, etc.), brought in by his 'big man'. As one businessman in a village said: *"The Minister is from this area - we get direct benefit from him. He has built our main road, brought our village a gravity water scheme, the dispensary, and the hospital in town... He also started the farmers' CBO, and made sure they got goats through the restocking program. If the Minister wasn't here, development of the*

*region would go very badly! [Wasn't it a donor which financed the hospital?] Yes, but the way it works is that he brings the donors to our region. If he hadn't lobbied them, we would simply not have all these services. We get more benefit from the national level than from the district, since we did not support the district chairman. As a result we get nothing from the district. For example, the school, which comes from the district, is very bad.*¹⁸

This leads to a situation where service provision activities are perceived to be very personalised. Most services are perceived to be provided by a certain 'big man' or its political camp, rather than by state institutions.

2.4. Developmental function of political patronage

It is important to note that these forms of regionalism, whereby politicians or 'camps' are bringing development to their own region (but not to other regions), are not intrinsically bad practices. On the contrary, they may bring more development to previously marginalised areas. As these political camps involve both local and national politicians, they are mechanisms of connecting the very local level up to the national level, and are able to translate needs from the local level up to the national. Also in Western political systems, many (or even most) politicians would see it as their duty to attract as many benefits as possible to their constituency. In theory, intense competition between different politicians from the same region could bring more development to that region, without overly harming the development of other regions. However, in practice, this competition has some substantial dangers, which are inherent to networks of political patronage. The question that needs to be asked in this section is: how does political patronage affect politics of development at a local level?

Firstly, the cake might be big enough in Western economies for such a rivalry - but not in Africa. In African politico-economic systems, this kind of political patronage is by its very nature a zero-sum game: there is simply not enough cake for everyone. There are always regions and

¹⁸ Interview local businessman, village II, 18-04-05. Community members and local government officials were ensured that they would remain anonymous in all publications.

groups which are going to be left out. State services are not necessarily located in the areas most in need of these services, but in the better-connected areas. In the district of research, all the 'big men' come from the same sub-county, which will be called 'sub-county A'. As a result, sub-county A is much more developed than the other sub-counties of the district. The other sub-counties lack political connections, creating a vicious circle of underdevelopment for them.

A good example of this is the education sector. Community members, politicians and civil servants alike identify education as an area very much embedded in the logic of patronage. On the one hand, the big men have their allies within both the political arm of the district (district councillors within the education committee) and the technical arm (district education office). Through these, they will try to ensure that state-related school funds as school facility grants are allocated to their constituencies. Within the district, schools which are located in key areas of support to the big men, or schools where the school management (school management committee and head teacher) are strong supporters of a political camp, will disproportionately benefit from state funds. As a result, schools within sub-county A are far better developed than the schools of the other sub-counties, which lack these political connections. Sub-county A (of which the Minister was the first university graduate) was also the first one to receive a state-sponsored primary and secondary school. On the other hand, as the big men have the most political influence, they manage to secure most government - and privately-sponsored university scholarships for their supporters. There is nothing wrong with this as such, but it leads to a situation where almost all of the university graduates in the district come from sub-county A. In turn, this leads to a bigger 'pool' of potential politicians, further developing sub-county A. Other sub-counties, which lack these connections, have been left out, and fail to attract 'bigger' development projects. As one district councillor of the committee summarizes: *"I'm a politician. I have to favour my people. I don't care about any others!"*¹⁹

¹⁹ Interview district councillor, 25-04-05.

Secondly, research²⁰ has demonstrated how increased pressures of political competition, in combination with the limited timeframes of the electoral cycle, do not bring greater development and democratisation, or tackle neo-patrimonial systems. On the contrary, they could intensify neo-patrimonial patterns of rule, and act as an incentive to corrupt practices. One factor leading to this is the fact that leaders want to maximise the benefits derived from state resources: all of them have invested a lot of money in their electoral campaigns. During their campaigns, local (LC I or LC III) councillors give small inducements such as soap or sugar; LC V councillors or MPs give bigger inducements such as contributions to local CSOs or other community projects. It is therefore seen as legitimate by them (and a large part of the electorate) to look for ways to recover that money.²¹

At the level of the local government, this translates into tensions between technocrats/civil servants and the elected councillors, who can be said to use different logics: respectively (more or less) equal distribution of resources and political patronage. This can be illustrated through an area such as taxation, which is seen as strongly part of the logic of political patronage.²² As one civil servant summarizes the "problematique": "*Elected leaders want to protect their electorate, they do not want their constituency to be harassed. For example, there is a situation where I want to close down some businesses because they don't have a trading licence. The LCI*

²⁰ Bratton, M., Van de Walle, N., *Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa*. In: Bratton, M. van de Walle, N., (eds.), *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997), pp. 61-96. Gabriel, J.M., 'Cameroon's Neopatrimonial Dilemma'. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 17, 2 (1999), pp. 173-196. Most of this research is limited to the national level, but these tendencies seem even stronger at the local level (Francis and James, 2003).

²¹ See also: Centre for Basic Research, Transparency Uganda, *The Impact of Political Corruption on Resource Allocation and Service Delivery in Local Governments in Uganda* (Centre for Basic Research, Kampala March 2005).

²² There is no space to elaborate on this, but other sites of decision making which are notorious for their patronage-dynamics are the District Tender Board and the District Service Commission. The taxation-discourse is used up to the presidential level for political purposes. During a rally in the district in the campaign for the presidential elections, Museveni was quoted to say that 'the poorest people should pay the minimum tax'. Of course, many people consider themselves 'the poorest people', and therefore refuse to pay tax. Recently, this form of graduated tax has been abolished.

*chairman comes and asks, "Please do not close these businesses, these are good people". Out of respect for the LCI, as an LCIII, you do not close that business.*²³

On the one hand, at all levels of the local government, many politicians do not want to confront their electorate. They do not want to lose votes by taxing their constituency, because *"They know them as good people."* On the other hand, non-elected bureaucrats - as this sub-county chief - are confronted with strong pressure from politicians, who have another rationale (political patronage) than the bureaucrats (equitable service-delivery). As politicians have more power, it becomes difficult for civil servants to confront the will of the local big man.²⁴ A civil servant such as the LCIII chief may therefore refrain from taxing the allies of the Minister or the Woman MP. Many civil servants even align themselves with one camp or the other, in order to survive in such a politicised environment. In other words, although bureaucrats have an assigned role of ensuring that development projects get allocated along legal-rational lines, when they are being co-opted in the particularistic logic of political patronage, they are no longer able to fulfil this role, provoking a further push towards patrimonialism. In this sense, politics and decentralised service delivery are no longer only a strict bureaucratic affair: bureaucratic institutions coexist with personalised political networks (cfr. Kelsall, 2002) and strong tensions exist between both logics.

This tension also translates itself into a relatively high turnover of technicians and politicians in the local government. This is certainly the case in the district of research, where there is a comparatively high turnover in key bureaucratic positions such as chief administrative officers, financial officers, and principal personnel. The same logic applies to local politicians. As a major Kampala donor-representative comments *"There is a very high turnover of politicians at district-level: 70-80% don't get re-elected. When politicians change that fast, they see their time in power as a chance to fill their pockets as quickly as possible! The biggest problem is that there simply is no recognised*

²³ Interview LCIII chief, 20-05-05.

²⁴ All civil servants of the district are being appointed by the District Service Commission. The members of the District Service Commission are being appointed by the District Council, which are elected politicians, on advice of the District Executive.

*political ethic.*²⁵ As the system of local government is still relatively new, many candidate-politicians make unfeasible promises. As a result, many of their voters get disappointed, and many politicians lack the capacity, or political ethics, to deal with government funds.

Thirdly, this system of political patronage might function reasonably well when there is a consensus on crucial issues between the different groups. If this is not the case, or when (electoral) tension is rising, the situation might translate itself into small-scale conflicts. This is the case in sub-county A: during election periods, sporadic violence erupts between supporters of both camps. For instance, in one village this political struggle provoked a severe conflict between two businesses. Allegedly, someone got poisoned in this conflict, and this led to a spiral of violence whereby businesses, several other buildings and the crops and animals of parties concerned got destroyed.

In such a system of political patronage, each side accuses the other of using 'corruption' or 'tricks' to get re-elected, and therefore does not accept the legitimacy of the other camp. However, the very rationale of these patronage-networks is based on the use of 'tricks', as there is an unequal and personalised distribution of resources. An example of this is the above-mentioned school funds. Politicians or 'patrons' will make sure their constituency or 'clients' get the necessary school funds, even if this involves using tricks. On the one hand, this is how politicians get their legitimacy, as this is what they are expected to do from the people on the ground. On the other hand, this means there will always be a base for instability - as one political camp will gladly accept the 'tricks' of his side, but under no circumstances the 'tricks' of the other side.

²⁵ Interview SDU representative (implementing agent USAID decentralisation), Kampala, 10-11-04.

3. IMPACT ON POLITICAL VALUES

This political struggle and its corresponding system of political patronage have a strong impact on the political values of the citizens. They have different expectations of services provided by the state when its institutions and service provision activities are being dominated by the particularistic logic of political patronage. Previous research²⁶ has clearly demonstrated how these divergent experiences of the state shape the ways in which individuals conceive of democratic practices, and the organisation of civil society at the local level.

To give us better insights into how the logic of political patronage affects political values and general relations between state and society, a household survey ($n=180$) was carried out comparing the two villages of the sub-county of the big men ('sub-county A') with two villages in another sub-county ('sub-county B'). Sub-county B is of the same district, but peripheral to the political struggle: none of the local 'big men' are from this area, and none are making big efforts to build up a power-base there. The MP currently representing sub-county B is not intending to stand again, and therefore not actively campaigning among the grassroots. He is therefore what is commonly called a 'Kampala-man': mainly residing in the capital Kampala, with little interest in his constituency. He is therefore not taking part in the political struggle between the two camps. The political conflict and patronage-networks are therefore quite weak in sub-county B.²⁷

A comparison of these two sub-counties can show the impact of political patronage on the political values of the communities concerned - in particular the impact of a politicised and personalised service-provision on the expectations vis-à-vis the services provided by the state. Both sub-counties have comparable variables : they are

²⁶ Maclean, Lauren Morris, 'Mediating ethnic conflict at the grassroots: the role of local associational life in shaping political values in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 4 (2004), pp. 589-617.

²⁷ The selection of this other sub-county took place after several interviews and site-visits. Both sub-counties have comparable variables but a different 'political influence' and participation in the political struggle. In this way, the impact of political patronage can be compared. Villages I and II are situated in sub-county A, villages III and IV in sub-county B.

placed in similar areas of the district (with a similar distance to the main road) and have the same ethnic composition. In regard to the state institutions, they have the same bureaucratic structures, the same number of staff and receive a similar level of funding from the district and national authorities. In other words, a comparison between both sub-counties can teach us better in the way the role of the state is perceived: what do people think about the responsibilities of the state in service-provision, and what responsibilities do they think they have towards the state?

3.1. Responsibilities of the government

There was a striking difference between the perception of the tasks and responsibilities of the state in service-provision activities.

In the 'political camps' sub-county A, there is an overwhelming emphasis on the provision of very individual, financial and material goods. As we can see in Table 1, the majority of the people wants the state simply to give them money (35%), or sums up a long list of all the goods the state should give them (19%). A good illustration of this is one woman saying: *"The Government should provide me with animals and then they construct the house of that animal. They should also build a house. My house is almost collapsing! And my husband is disabled. If the house collapses I die and cannot go anywhere."*²⁸

Another example was a man saying: *"The Government should give money - any money, whatever they decide. The government should also assist me in animal rearing and poultry; provide me with firewood; and give me knowledge about banking. All these are key-concepts of development to me!"*²⁹ In other words, people have a very detailed view of the services the state has to provide, and have high expectations of the state: The state is seen as omnipotent and paternalistic. Some people take this paternalism quite literally. As one woman explains: *"The government has a duty of seeing me. The government is my father. Every time I am in trouble, the government will come and assist me."*³⁰ This could be explained by the strongly paternalistic role of the patrons: The 'big men' come to the village to

²⁸ Interview local farmer, village II, 11-05-05.

²⁹ Interview local farmer, village I, 08-04-05.

³⁰ Interview local farmer, village II, 30-05-05.

explain how they are taking care of their people, and how they have provided all these services to the village. The 'big men' are therefore esteemed to be very rich and powerful. As a result, people on the ground want them to play a detailed and extensive role in their lives, through the provision of financial and material benefits.

Sub-county B on the other hand has a more community-orientated vision towards the state. The state should primarily provide services for the benefit of the wider community, such as hospitals and schools (39%), or services such as roads, markets or electricity (29%). Only a small minority wants material benefits (2%), which is 8 times less than sub-county A.

The strongly individual and material expectations of sub-county A could be seen as a result of the political struggle in the sub-county and its system of political patronage: There is no expectation among people that institutions (state, NGOs, donors) will deliver services on an independent basis. It is up to the 'big men' to bring services to the region, and only through these big men that services get delivered to this sub-county. In other words, state institutions are not perceived to deliver these services on an impersonal, independent and universal basis, but are vehicles to be captured by the 'big men' for the benefit of a particular community. Each 'patron' should try and gain as much control over state resources as possible, and use these for the benefit of his constituency or power base. As such, this is not 'immoral', 'corrupt' or a 'trick' - it is the duty of politicians to try to obtain benefits for their constituency.

In sub-county B, this political struggle is much less strong: State institutions might be personalised, but definitely not to the extent of sub-county A. This is reflected in the political values of the sub-county: people expect the state to be there for everyone - not only for people supporting the Minister or the Woman MP. In other words, the state should in the first place deliver communal services, not individual services.

	'Political camps' sub-county A	'Neutral' sub-county B
Most frequent responsibilities of the state	Money: 35% Material benefits: 17%	Hospitals/Schools: 39% Roads/Markets/Electricity: 29%
Other responsibilities of the state	Hospitals/Schools: 14% Security: 12% Individual loans: 9% Trainings: 7% Water/Boreholes: 3% Employment: 2% Roads/Markets/Electricity: 1% Food: 0%	Water/Boreholes: 10% Employment: 9% Security: 5% Food: 4% Material benefits: 2% Money: 2% Trainings: 0% Individual loans: 0%

Table 1: Comparison between the responsibilities of the government in 'political camps' sub-county A and 'neutral' sub-county B.

3.2. Responsibilities towards the government

When we look at how individuals perceive their responsibilities towards the government, the differences are not so clear. As a starting point, both sub-counties have difficulties in grasping what their responsibilities or duties are vis-à-vis the state.

In 'political camps' sub-county A, people perceive 'digging on their individual lands' as their principal duty. This is a purely individual responsibility towards the government, with individual benefits - not connected to the wider community. As one man explains: *"If the government comes here, I take them to my place, and show them what I have done: how I have been digging on my land and how I have used my resources for my benefit."*³¹ Also 'taking care of the children' is seen as major responsibility towards the government, since the children can work for the government later. Both of responsibilities have clear individual benefits, and have no direct relation to the service-provision activities of the state or the big men. In other words, there is not much feeling of reciprocity towards these efforts.

³¹ Interview local farmer, village II, 26-04-05.

In 'neutral' sub-county B, most people perceive 'paying tax' as their principal responsibility towards the state. This is twice as much as sub-county A, and is a sign of a more 'communal' attitude towards their responsibilities. Overall, sub-county B attaches more importance to 'communal' responsibilities (56% - paying tax, community work, voting) than sub-county A (39% - paying tax, community work, voting and providing security). Parallel to this, sub-county A has a more individual vision of their responsibilities than sub-county B - respectively 58% (digging on individual land, taking care of the children and no duties) and 41% (digging on individual land, no duties and taking care of the children).

For sub-county A, this could be explained by the fact that services are very much perceived to be 'given' by the Minister or the Woman MP. As explained above, in their struggle for support, politicians try to get hold of certain services, or to politicise the service-provision. Services are clearly perceived as a 'gift', which makes it harder to perceive those in terms of corresponding duties or responsibilities - certainly if these responsibilities entail no direct benefit for the persons concerned. An example of this was a microfinance association in one of the villages, which was started and supported by one of the big men. This association collapsed quite soon after it started: People perceived the loans as 'gift', and therefore refused to pay back the money. The loan was seen as government money, and therefore 'free money' which had not to be paid back.

	'Political camps' sub-county A	'Neutral' sub-county B
Most frequent duties to the state	Digging on individual land: 26% Taking care of the children: 24%	Paying tax: 36% Digging on individual land: 28%
Other duties to the state	Paying tax: 16% Community work: 10% No duties: 8% Providing security: 8% Vote: 5% Other: 3%	Community work: 18% No duties: 9% Taking care of the children: 4% Other: 3% Vote: 2% Providing security: 0%

Table 2: Comparison between the responsibilities towards the government in 'political camps' sub-county A and 'neutral' sub-county B

4. CONCLUSION

This article has shown the importance of neo-patrimonial theories in understanding local socio-political dynamics: it shows how within 'formal' state institutions, there is an informal logic of competing political camps and their subsequent networks of political patronage. This logic is conflicting with a non-partisan bureaucratic logic, as political camps are competing for resources and power. It points out how political patronage as a political rationality is a form of '*govern-mentality*' (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Lemke 2001) with a strong impact on the political values of the local population, influencing the way in which governmental technologies (Blundo 2006) such as decentralisation are perceived and negotiated.

This 'informal logic' of competing political camps should not automatically be treated as a typically negative and unproductive element of African politics. On the contrary, it could be considered as a legitimate element of competitive politics within every democratic system, as it is able to bring greater development to marginalised areas. However, this turns out to be a faulty presumption. Development is happening along very arbitrary and personalised lines: Only areas which have the necessary political connections can be deve-

loped. Moreover, this kind of development is almost per definition a zero-sum game. As is illustrated through the education-sector, the development of some regions ('sub-county A') happens at the cost of the development of other sub-counties.

Political patronage has not only an effect within state institutions, but also on how the general population perceives services provided by the state. Compared to 'neutral' sub-county B, sub-county A has an omnipotent and paternalistic 'top-down' image of the state. Since state institutions have become very personalised, communities have a very personalised and particularistic view of the services delivered by the state. These services are not perceived to be 'universal' or 'equal', but are seen as a result of the competition for services and resources between 'big men', who want to reward their supporters. Therefore the state is not expected to provide goods for the general community, but should assist individuals with particular goods and services. The state and politicians should in the first place provide people with an extensive list of financial and material benefits.³² Therefore, political patronage is labelled not as 'corruption', but rather as a system where formal institutions become 'invaded' by this local political struggle, and deliver services and other benefits on a strictly personal basis.

There is a different situation in the 'neutral' sub-county B. There is no political struggle in the sub-county, and none of the 'big men' are very active. There is no patron explaining to the people what they have done for the population. As a consequence, state and societal institutions are perceived to be much less conflictual and personalised, and so are the expectations vis-à-vis the services provided by the state. This is translated into a much more communal attitude towards the state.

Several conclusions can be drawn on the nature of interaction between the state institutions and the local population. Blundo (2006) convincingly shows how in a situation of generally under-equipped local administrations wherein also the different bureaucratic-administrative rules and regulations are unfamiliar to citizens, a variety of actors act as a footbridge between civil servants and the populations. This is fostered by the general weak sense of

³² In this sense, the state legitimacy is primarily evaluated using terms as 'not enough' or 'too much'. Cfr. Bierschenk and de Sardan 2003.

accountability of government institutions. A similar process can be seen in this case-study of Western Uganda³³, where politicians and their patronage networks act as a connecting agent between governmental institutions and the local population. In this process, laws and regulations are selectively applied by politicians and technicians, leading to blurred boundaries between legal and illegal, depending on the actor and his strategies: it has been described how state institutions are captured by a political logic and how state services are clearly perceived to be brought by individual politicians. Consequently, state institutions not only become personalised, but are also, to a large degree, based on participation and access to political networks (cfr. Boas, 2002). This points out how bureaucratic institutions and public administrations are continuously transformed and compromised in a process of negotiations with the wider environment, and in particular with politicians and their patronage networks. In this process, bureaucratic laws and regulations acquire different functions and meanings depending on the concrete outcomes of this negotiation process, which again is clearly illustrated by the different results of the household survey. In one sub-county, this process of 'informalisation' or 'negotiation' led to clear communal attitudes vis-à-vis the state, whereas this led to clear personalised and material attitudes in the other sub-county. In this sense, these figures show how politicians and their patronage networks, through both circumventing and informalising existing formal state institutions, play an important role in defining the perception of state services at a local level.³⁴

Lastly, through highlighting and emphasising the role of political patronage in explaining remarkable differences in perceptions of the role of the state, this does not mean that these are the only explanatory variables.³⁵ Other factors which can help us to understand this are for

³³ On the under-equipment of Ugandan local administrations, see for example Barkan et al., 2004; Hickey, 2003.

³⁴ It also points out the difference between popular norms and expectations from bureaucratic-rational norms. This does not mean that this article presupposes that the African state structures and perception should automatically comply with the ideal form of the legal-rational Weberian state with liberal polities, but rather points out how the state is continuously renegotiated with a variety of actors, in which politicians play an important role.

³⁵ In a similar research, Maclean (2004) finds strong differences in political values between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. He does however not explain this through

example the levels of bureaucratisation and the levels of approachability of the local state institutions; factors which, through the focus on the concrete interaction between political patronage and the local population was not tackled in this article. The qualitative and quantitative findings of this article can nevertheless be seen as an invitation for further research into issues of personalisation of the local government: 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1983) of local bureaucratic structures and the forms of interaction with the local population in everyday life will surely deepen our understanding of these strong differences in political values, taking into account these findings on the impact of patronage on the political values of the local population.

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